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ABSTRACT

Libraries are frequently faced with policy decisions which can affect the quality and cost of library services for years to come. This point can be illustrated by citing examples of decisions made at the University of Wisconsin Library in the areas of: (1) conforming to national cataloging standards; (2) producing catalog cards in-house; and (3) pre-catalog searching and cataloging. This paper provides specific examples of decisions made in each of these areas and examines the impact of each decision on the effectiveness and cost of library services. (EMH)

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DECISION POINTS IN CATALOGING

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DECISION POINTS IN CATALOGING

Cost savings in Technical Services can be achieved in many different ways. Probably the single most important is effective use of the decision making process. Each day decisions are required of us that demand clear thinking, ~~and~~ careful analysis and sound judgement. The skill of the decision makers in identifying, analyzing and evaluating the possible alternatives in each problem area is the most important element if we are to have any degree of success in our goal of improving productivity.

The matters that need decisions may be policy matters which may have a long range effect--sometimes permanent and irreversible. It is hardly necessary to say that decisions such as these should only be made after carefully evaluating all of the alternatives.

Other decisions may be of a less permanent nature, such as decisions on pre-cataloging search procedures. As conditions change these decisions must and should change. The skill with which change is made is also very important. There is a dynamic here that cannot be denied. Changing conditions make even the best system obsolete. A continuing on-going analysis of operations is essential, an informed awareness of developing technology is important and the skill to weigh the

evidence and make effective decisions is at the heart of successful administration.

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CONFORMITY TO NATIONAL STANDARDS

By using illustrations drawn from experience at Wisconsin I hope to illustrate how the decision making process has been used by one library to lower its costs through increased productivity. I offer these examples, not because Wisconsin is the outstanding example, but simply because it is the library I am most familiar with.

First, let me go back to the mid nineteen fifties and talk about a series of very basic, long range decisions Wisconsin made to bring its cataloging practice into conformity with national standards. Needless to say we are very grateful for these decisions today. It is hard to imagine from this perspective why some of them were opposed so strenuously at the time.

In 1953, after long, long debate, a decision was made to discontinue use of the Cutter Expansive Classification system and to adopt the Library of Congress Classification System. Further, it was decided that we would reclassify only books with a pattern of continued use according to a formula that would call for the reclassification of about

30% of the collection. Today we wonder why this was such a difficult matter to decide since the savings over the years have been incalculable. If there was any fault with this decision it was that it should have been made twenty five years earlier. But in 1953, I must tell you, it was a traumatic decision for many of our staff and admittedly one that made use of the library more difficult for a generation of students during the transitional years.

At the same time another decision was made that Wisconsin would accept the classification assigned by the Library of Congress without exception. Today we are exceedingly grateful for this controversial decision. There was substantial opposition on the part of some very sincere people, including some distinguished faculty members, who feared that important needs local to our campus would suffer by so surrendering local option.

A third decision made about the same time was that Wisconsin would adopt Library of Congress subject headings and that we would begin a long term project to edit all existing headings to conform with the Library of Congress List of Subject Headings.

These decisions to bring our authority files into conformity with national standards and Library of Congress practice, all made in the nineteen fifties prepared the way for more effective use of the ever-increasing output of cata-

loging from the Library of Congress that we experienced in the nineteen sixties and on into the nineteen seventies. It also was a contributing factor to a shift in staffing patterns in the Catalog Department. The proportion of para-professionals to professionals almost reversed itself between 1960 and 1970. It was an important factor in the ease with which we have been able to accept Library of Congress cataloging without modification. As another bonus, we now find ourselves in excellent position to make maximum use of the Library of Congress authority files, which they have announced will be made available online to networks within the next few years.

Even though great care is taken to study each problem thoroughly, occasionally a bad decision will be made. Usually this is because a disproportionate weight is given to one factor that seems to be of high importance at the time the study is done but which later becomes less important. One of Wisconsin's decisions of the late nineteen fifties illustrates this point. In one of our periodic drives to effect dollar savings to meet a goal set by the Joint Budget Committee of the State Legislature or the Governor's Budget Analysts, we made a decision to discontinue making series added entries, arguing to ourselves that this information is readily available to the scholar in other bibliographic sources. In order not to mislead our users we further decided that it was important to withdraw all existing series added entry records if

we discontinued making them. Today we view this decision as one of our major errors. Although there is no question that it has saved money, it has degraded the effectiveness of our catalog and has hurt our service to students and faculty. Unfortunately the cost of replacing all of the series added entries down to date prevents us from reversing this decision today.

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DECISION TO PRODUCE CATALOG CARDS IN-HOUSE

Next I would like to use some of the decisions that dealt with specific operations to illustrate a more ad hoc type of decision.

During the late nineteen fifties and through the nineteen sixties, research libraries enjoyed a period of sizeable increases in funds available for book purchases. Money came not only from library operating budgets but also from various foundations and from the federal government. As a result of the increase in book acquisitions, a serious over-load soon developed in the Catalog Department and cataloging arrearages began to mount. At Wisconsin the uncataloged arrearage exceeded 100,000 titles at its peak. Something had to be done. Naturally we were looking for every possible way to improve our productivity. We looked at such things as: 1) funding new cataloging positions,

2) how to use new technology to reduce the cost of card production, 3) how to use the cataloging done by the Library of Congress more effectively. Let us look at each of these in turn.

The recommendation to add new cataloging positions was not very effective, and of course it would not of itself cut unit costs First, while there was lots of money for books, there were no new funds for catalogers. It is hard to believe today, but there were vacant cataloging positions at this time that could not be filled because of a shortage of library school graduates. This fact was frequently cited by top administration as a reason for not funding new cataloging positions. If we were going to ~~improve~~ increase productivity we were going to have to look elsewhere for the solution.

The use of new technology in card production was much more successful. Let me remind you of several developments of the nineteen sixties that encouraged change in this area.

1. Inexpensive, push-button simple mastermakers for offset plates came onto the market.

2. Several methods for enlarging catalog records from the National Union Catalog to catalog card size were developed: 35 mm. camera, Xerox Copyflo, Copy Cat, Polaroid Camera and the electrostatic copier.

3. Methods to produce sets of headed cards using automatic typewriters were devised. The Flexowriter and the MT/ST

were the most successful.

4. Under the National Program for Acquisition and Cataloging the Library of Congress made sets of depository cards available free of charge to libraries which agreed to participate in this program. These cards were shipped daily by air mail and reached libraries far more quickly than any other method--even proof sheets.

When all of these developments were weighed against our existing card production system we decided that a complete re-design was necessary. Piece meal tinkering would not bring about the desired results. Consequently we made the following series of decisions, not all at once, but step by step over the years of the nineteen sixties.

1. First, we decided to discontinue ordering sets of catalog cards from the Library of Congress and to print our own catalog cards in the library

2. We decided to establish a depository catalog using the timely NPAC depository cards.

3. We decided to make our offset masters by the photo-direct method, 6-up, rather than single title, typewritten masters and to modify our offset press accordingly.

4. We decided to use a custom modified electrostatic copier to enlarge cataloging records from the National Union Catalog to original card size, to make offset masters from the enlargements, and to print sets of cards by offset. The

The copier modified for us was subsequently marketed nationally by the Vend-a-Copy Company of Oak Park, Illinois.

5. We decided that the above methods worked well whenever we had or could reproduce camera ready copy. But when we had to type the first unit card it was more efficient to capture this data and produce a fully headed set of cards using a tape driven typewriter.

By the end of the nineteen sixties we had used these elements to put together a very efficient, cost effective card production system that operated with incredible smoothness.

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PRE-CATALOG SEARCH AND CATALOGING

Next I would like to look at how the decision making process was used to improve productivity in pre-catalog searching and in cataloging.

First, let me list some of the factors which we considered in making our decisions.

1. Since the NPAC program started the Library of Congress output of cataloging, particularly for titles in foreign languages had increased by well over one hundred percent.

2. As mentioned above because of a shortage of library school graduates we were having difficulty filling cataloging positions.

3. Book acquisitions were at an all time high and a high-

er percentage of the books purchased were older imprints.

4. Searching done by the Acquisitions Department was not accepted by the Catalog Department but was being repeated.

5. An individual searcher did the searching for one cataloger or perhaps two catalogers. As a result some catalogers required more searching than others. Some searching was pursued too far and other searching was incompletely done. We badly needed to establish unified control of pre-catalog searching.

As a first step a new department was created and staffed with persons transferred from the Acquisitions Department and the Catalog Department. It was given the responsibility for all post-receipt bibliographic searching, along with several other responsibilities which time prevents me from exploring with you. After a few rough months, during which time a number of resignations occurred, including the department head, new loyalties were developed and the confidence of the catalogers in the quality of searching done under the new structure grew slowly. Unified searching procedures were slowly developed for each category of material by the new department head (a former cataloging supervisor) which significantly moved us toward the goal of more effective use of LC cataloging.

In connection with several theories that were forming, we felt that it was important to know just how quickly the Library of Congress was making cataloging available for current

imprints--particularly for books from the NPAC countries and domestic imprints. A study was conducted and the results showed us that catalog copy was located for about 35 % of the books searched on arrival. A decreasing additional amount was received each month until the sixth month when the level of receipts reached the minimum level of about 2 % per month.

It had long been our practice to search each newly acquired title thoroughly upon arrival. The data from the study summarized above suggested that a good bit of this searching effort was, indeed, being wasted. A decision was made, therefore, to defer searching of all current imprints from the NPAC countries and the United States until they had been on our shelves for six months. During this period of time automatic matches with depository cards were made by means of a temporary record for each book received filed by clerical staff. Copy cataloging was done for all titles that were matched with their cataloging in this way. By the end of six months we found that approximately 75 % of the books had been cataloged, the balance were then retrieved from the stacks and given their first search. This search after six months usually produced copy for an additional seven to eight percent so that around 83 % of the books from NPAC countries and the US were cataloged at the end of six months with a minimal investment of searching time.

It was also part of the plan to send a Title Delayed

Queery to the Library of Congress for each NPAC title that remained uncataloged. By the end of one year 92 - 93 % of these books had been cataloged using cataloging from the Library of Congress. The small remaining number of books were retrieved and searched for original cataloging.

This plan which we called the Deferred Search Program was largely designed by Donna Senzig who was head of the department at that time. It represents an outstanding example of the effective use of the decision making process to improve productivity in technical services.

Next I would like to talk about a plan to make searching older titles more productive. After a brief study of how long after publication cataloging for a title might be expected to appear in the National Union Catalog we decided to limit the search for cataloging copy for older imprints to the two cumulations of NUC that followed the date of publication. For example, a title published in 1958 would be searched in the 1956-1962 cumulation and the 1963-1967 cumulation only; a title published in 1923 would be searched in the basic set of the Library of Congress Catalog and in the 1943-1947 cumulation. We made this decision because we felt that although operating under this limitation would fail to locate a few pieces of LC cataloging, the savings we would realize from unproductive searches thru the entire sequence of LC and NUC catalogs would be substantial. This theory has shown itself to be valid and the

"Two LC Search" as it came to be called was a significant factor in helping us cope with the flood of new acquisitions pouring in on us. I have not yet succeeded in convincing our staff to discontinue searching in the quarterly and monthly issues and to rely entirely on the depository catalog. I argue that this is feasible because we do not catalog from contributed copy so soon in any case.

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THE PROBLEMS OF THE SEVENTIES

By 1970 we had dealt successively with the basic units of the manual system of cataloging:

1. We had restructured the organization of technical services to utilize most effectively several recent technological developments.

2. We had increased the percent of para-professional staff in order to utilize most efficiently the increased amount of cataloging output at the Library of Congress.

3. We had devised bibliographic search procedures that produced the largest amount of cataloging copy per searching hour.

4. We had assembled the machinery and the skilled staff necessary to produce our catalog cards in-house from depository

cards, enlargements from the National Union Catalog as well as typed unit cards.

I cannot stress too strongly that all of this was possible to a large extent because for a decade earlier we had, step by step, brought our authority files into agreement with the Library of Congress and had based our cataloging decisions on developing national standards.

The decade of the seventies brings a whole new series of problems which require a new set of decisions. Let me suggest a few of these:

1. Each year serial costs are consuming a higher and higher percent, many are saying a disproportionate percent, of the book budget. What should we do about this?

2. Library budgets are not increasing fast enough to off-set the impact of inflation of prices and the devaluation of the dollar. Book Acquisitions are, therefore, declining. How should staffing be changed to meet this problem?

3. There are more professional librarians than there are jobs. Many library school graduates are accepting paraprofessional and in some cases clerical jobs. What impact will this have on staff morale?

4. How shouldthe transitional period between manual cataloging and computer assisted cataloging be handled ?

5. How should an on-line cataloging system be staffed for most efficient use?

6. How can resource sharing be developed to improve

library service to students and faculty?

7. The Library of Congress announced that it plans to close its catalog by 1980. What plans should be made in preparation for this drastic change?

8. How can we best plan for the inevitable day when the on-line public catalog replaces the card catalog?

I have listed these few current issues to show you that the need for careful analysis and wise decision making in technical services is as crucially important as it ever was. Just the day before I left Madison to come to this conference, we were discussing ways to use member input cataloging records in the OCLC data base most efficiently. In particular we wanted to know whether name searches of the data base can be helpful in speeding our name authority search.

It is my hope that this brief account of one libraries use of the decision making process as a major tool for cost-savings in technical services will be useful to some of you. Remember what I stressed in the beginning, the decisions we made were made in a particular context; they might not be the right decisions for another library. They were used here only to illustraste how one library made, what we believe was effective use of a very important tool -- the decision making process.